

Information, Answers & Reviews

Noises Off



I've always liked films and plays that are about films and plays themselves.

Maybe it's because there is still a part of me that would have like to have been an actor. (Said term must be pronounced with the air of exaggerated sophistication that implies the lack of same.) Noises Off is one of my favorites. It has an all-star comedy cast featuring Michael Caine, Carol Burnett, Denholm Elliott, Julie Hagerty, Marilu Henner, John Ritter, and Christopher Reeve. The story is about a group of actors in a touring company performing a comedic play that they hope will head to the big time. In this case the action behind the scenes is as funny, or funnier, than what is taking place on stage. The film gives us a chance to see the action from both sides. From the front we see the play "Nothing On," from the back we see the interactions among the actors. There are affairs, personality conflicts, and drinking to the point of drunkenness. The term "noises off" comes from the direction that backstage sounds are to cease, something that doesn't exactly happen backstage in the movie.

Noises Off is a comedy based on the play by Michael Frayn. It is a fast paced and driven movie that reminds me quite a bit of some of the best skits from the Carol Burnett Show. In most plays backstage is an area of controlled chaos. In the case of the backstage action in Noises Off remove the word controlled. If you like a good, semi intelligent comedy mixed with slapstick and outrageous personalities you should give Noises Off a try.

Posted by Keith C. on June 18, 2014

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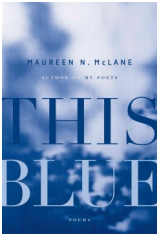
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Another Day in This Here Cosmos



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If you're looking for some interesting new poetry, go no further than Maureen McLane's new book. Even the titles are inviting: "Another Day in this Here Cosmos," "OK Fern," "Tell Us What Happened in the 14th Century," and "Morning with Adirondack Chair." McLane writes often about travel, nature, love, but most importantly it's all filtered through the lens of her mind. Her particular world-view is humorous and serious at the same time, and often feels edgy, new. There's a sense that she does not take herself too seriously while at the same time, she writes in deep earnest.

One poem begins, "OK fern / I'm your apprentice / I can tell you // apart from your / darker sister." It ends with a sincere request for the wild plant to tell the narrator what to do with her life. (We've all been there speaking to trees or inanimate objects.)

In "Levanto," a beautiful travel poem, she says, "scant pines / stagger the Apennines / semaphoring? I am older / than the sea / in me." [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on June 17, 2014

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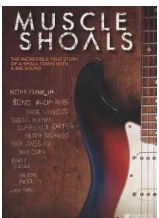
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Muscle Shoals



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Muscle Shoals is great music documentary about the "special sound" that came out of the studio recordings of this small town in Alabama that includes names like Percy Sledge, Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Lynyrd Skynyrd, and The Allman Brothers (among others). Interviews with the studio musicians, the engineers, and some of the more famous people involved on the bands listed above help tell the story of this great place to make music. I was particularly interested in the story of the session musicians from that town, named "The Swampers" that played behind the varied kinds of musicians that came to record over the years. [Read more](#)

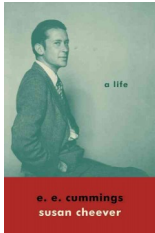
Posted by Brandon R. on June 16, 2014

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A Poet's Life



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If you like the lyrical, visual poetry of e e cummings, this biography of his life will appeal to you. Even if you are not a poetry fan, but you enjoy reading about Greenwich Village and Paris during their artistic heydays, you will enjoy Susan Cheever's carefully researched biography.

e e cummings was born into privilege in Cambridge, Mass. His father a professor and minister at Harvard. He loved technology and was always buying the next new thing, whether that was an early automobile or a collapsible canoe with folding seats.

The latter purchase caused one of the most horrifying incidents of e e's teenage years. He and his sister took the canoe out on a lake at their summer place in New Hampshire. Their favorite dog, Rex, accompanied them, but unfortunately, turned suddenly to see something. The boat capsized. And as Elizabeth, e e's sister, clung to it, the canoe sank. Meanwhile Rex had swum almost the whole way back to shore, but then heard the children and hurried back. Exhausted by this time, the dog pushed Elizabeth down. Elizabeth came up sputtering for air and Rex shoved her down again. As the dog circled close for his third attempt to rescue himself, e e swam over and held Rex down until he stopped breathing. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on June 9, 2014

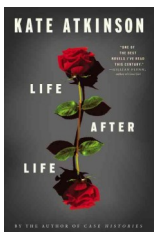
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Booksplus Discussion, Sunday June 1: Life After Life by Kate Atkinson



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In the first hundred pages of this novel, Ursula Todd, its heroine, lives and dies at least six times. Once she dies in childbirth, another time she falls off her own roof, having chased a sibling's favorite toy, and a third time she dies of influenza. This alternative history novel, although innovative in form, is rich in storytelling particularly about life at the beginning of the last century and during World Wars I and II. Ursula's intelligent and perceptive take upon the world makes captivating reading.

New York Times reviewer, Janet Maslin, called *Life after Life* "a big book that defies logic, chronology and even history in ways that underscore its author's fully untethered imagination." *Publishers Weekly* described the book this way, "through Ursula's many lives and the accretion of what T.S. Eliot called visions and revisions, she's found an inventive way to make both the war's toll and the pull of alternate history, of darkness avoided or diminished, fresh.

Atkinson is not afraid to take risks including using Adolph Hitler as a walk-on character in this book—in fact he's responsible for one of Ursula's many deaths.

Please join us for a book talk about this intriguing book this Sunday, June 1st at 2pm. All are welcome. We will meet in Room 2B. For more information about this and future [Booksplus](#) programs, please follow the link.

Posted by Dory L. on May 28, 2014

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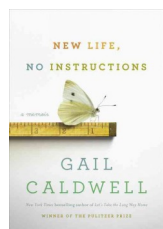
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New Life, No Instructions



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Did you ever hobble around on crutches? Discover that your most basic possession, your body, does not work as it once did? This excellent memoir about rehabilitation, friendship, loss, and the love of a great dog is a tearjerker at times, but always incredibly well-written. Wow, does Caldwell know how to spin a yarn.

Gail Caldwell suffered from polio as a small child. In this account she describes how her mother sprawled on the floor with her when she was young and did the tough leg exercises needed to strengthen Gail's leg.

All her life, Gail adapted to living with a bum leg. In her late fifties she decided to adopt a strong Samoyed pup. And as Tula grew, Gail soon found herself falling more and more often, and that she could no longer hike the three mile reservoir loop with her strong-willed pet.

Doctor after doctor told Gail that her limp, the weakness in her leg and her frequent falls were caused by her polio, but Gail finally sought another opinion. The new doctor asked to see her CT scans and X-rays but there were no recent ones. Upon doing them, he discovered that Gail's hip was shattered with the ball absolutely flat. She needed hip replacement immediately. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on May 25, 2014

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